

Greetings to our VSAO members! As this is my first newsletter for VSAO, I would like first to say how delighted and honoured I am to take on the role of President and would like especially to thank Suzanne Bailey, Alison Halsall, David Latham, and Tina Choi for their kind help, constant support, and warm generosity. Please join me also in welcoming Hao Li to the Executive: we are delighted that she has joined us and look forward to working with her this year!

In March, we held our Winter Evening Lecture at the Bahen Centre at the University of Toronto. This year, the presenter was Dr. David Bentley of Western University, and in his paper, "The 'Old Italian Book,' that, According to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Made Him 'the Particular Kind of Man and Artist He [Was],'" Dr. Bentley shared his exciting research into Rossetti's reading and the development of his art. After the talk, a number of us went for dinner to continue the discussion and had a lovely time on that rainy March evening.

I'd like to thank VSAO members for joining us at our spring conference this past April and making this lovely gathering, held this year at Glendon College in Toronto, an enjoyable and productive experience for all.

The theme of this year's conference was "Victorian Marketplaces: Consumers, Consumables, Circulation, and Consumption," and we had a wonderful, international range of papers presented on the day. In the morning panel, Ashley Wilcox of Tufts University spoke on "The Commodification of the Scaffold in Victorian England" and gave us a new perspective on the marketing of executions in the nineteenth century. Julianna Will of York University presented her thought-provoking paper, "Consuming Maidenheads: Hymens and Hymen Metaphors in Popular Victorian Texts." Margo Beggs (Independent Scholar) presented a thoughtful and interesting overview of the Victorian expatriate artistic community in Rome in her paper, "'My Little, Simple Souvenirs': Consuming Mid-Victorian Photographs of Neoclassical Statuary in Rome." And Katy Jackson of Royal Holloway, University of London, presented an enjoyable and informative paper on "Cutlery in Circulation: Buying, Keeping, and Stealing." Following a lively discussion and pleasant lunch, we were then fortunate to hear two terrific keynote addresses, the first by Dr. Deepali Dewan, Dan Mishra Curator of South Asian Arts & Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and Professor of Art History at the University of Toronto. Her paper, "Knowing Chintz: The Cloth That Changed The World," was a richly illustrated and provocative look at this important fabric and its place in the Victorian world. Our second keynote speaker was Dr. Stuart McCook, Professor of History at Guelph University. His paper, "Confessions of an Accidental Victorianist: Thinking about the Victorian World in Global Context," considered the development and effects of this ubiquitous commodity in the nineteenth century. Both keynote speakers allowed us to see their innovative and valuable research and enriched our understanding of Victorian commodity culture and its global reach.

Once again, the conference was made possible by the outstanding work of our graduate students on the executive of the VSAO, and we owe them a great debt of thanks. Emily Rothwell, a doctoral candidate in the Visual Studies stream at Carleton University, and Lin Young, a doctoral candidate in Victorian literature at Queen's University, focusing on visual and material culture, have worked tirelessly, both on the spring conferences of this year and 2018,

as well as on the jointly sponsored ACCUTE/VSAO panels at Congress. They are continuing in their capacity as graduate student executive members and have already put together the CFP for next year's panel (see below), which will focus on "Eco-Victorians: Water, Land, and the World," for the Humanities Congress at Western University, London, Ontario, May 30th-June 5th, 2020. Please consider sending a proposal and joining us at Congress next spring.

Here is Emily's report from this year's ACCUTE Conference:

Delightful Dispatches from ACCUTE at Congress 2019, at UBC, Vancouver

The majestic mountains and Pacific atmosphere made UBC a perfect spot to ponder Victorian modes of leisure and tomfoolery as we were all inspired to come together as scholars emboldened by Vancouver's beauty. This year's joint VSAO-ACCUTE panel, entitled "*Victorian Fun, Amusement, and Delight*," offered an academic buffet of scholarly delights at which we all thought through and discussed the zany and complex histories which surrounded ideas of "fun" from the era. It was a thrilling year to be a Victorianist graduate student at ACCUTE and to participate in a plethora of sessions which focused on this epoch ripe for scholarly pursuits. But our panel was especially lucky to have three rich and thoughtful papers that each explored novel avenues of inquiry into the concept of amusement along with the paradoxical discourses and histories associated with modes of Victorian delight.

Our first presenter, Alicia Alves, enticed us to ponder the myriad and creative ways in which concepts of animal kinship, childhood, sexuality and hybridity could be seen to be at work in both Lewis Carroll's fun-filled golden afternoon in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and Christina Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses*. Julianna K. Will then led us through an erudite discussion of the way in which Victorians embraced classicist discourses inspired by concomitant and playful historicist turns that were evinced by, she argued, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. Finally, Marion Grant concluded the morning by exploring the ways in which a female player's performance histories, specifically those of the vital theatre actress Ellen Terry, were bound up with modes of print culture, gender and politics in interwoven and fascinating ways.

We concluded our panel with a wonderfully rich discussion that could have gone on for another hour, well into our luncheon, by thinking through the ways in which ideas of Victorian amusement were always already inseparable from concepts related to the past; from notions of antiquity revisited; from the roles of gender and sexuality; from the shifting epistemic frameworks of academic and scientific disciplines that informed ideas of hybridity; from the way in which transgressive fun within restrictive dominant socio-political contexts unfolded; and from the moments of brief agency, or liberation, that could be glimpsed in the histories and discourses traced by our three presenters.

While I was a solo chair this year, I was honoured to represent the tireless work of the VSAO and my fellow graduate student colleague, Lin Young, as our panel proved to be a lively session—with a few technical hiccups that bonded us and enlivened our convivial discussion. We look forward to our next cub-reporter dispatch to you from ACCUTE's next gathering and we wish you all a well-deserved and relaxing summer!

Emily Rothwell and Lin Young

VSAO Executive Members-at-Large

And here is the CFP for this year's ACCUTE/VSAO panel at Congress:

VSAO-Sponsored ACCUTE Joint Session: "Eco-Victorians: Water, Land, and the World," for the Humanities Congress at the University of Western Ontario, May 30th-June 5th, 2020

From Charles Dickens's ecopoetical rivers, to the wondrous route across the sea to *Treasure Island*, the Victorian era was resplendent with images of water, seafaring, and global travel. At the same time, as J.M.W. Turner's visceral abolitionist painting *Slave Ship* attests, society was literally kept afloat by the oceanic trade routes which forcibly moved both human (slaves) and inhuman cargo (colonized resources) throughout what Paul Gilroy has famously coined "the Black Atlantic." The word "ecology" was coined by Ernst Haeckel in 1866, ushering in the formal study of diverse ecosystems, terrain sites and watery worlds which were then being transformed by industrial capitalism and imperialism. Indeed, Victorians saw the power of "the Anthropocene" unleashed during that grave epoch in which the human species became, and has remained, the dominant influence on our planet's climate and environment.

This panel invites papers that examine the ways in which water, land, and the ecological world connecting them were constructed in this era.

Possible themes might include but are not limited to:

- representations of seas, landscapes, and ecosystems
- eco-writing, eco-criticism, print culture, illustration
- tourism, parks, maritime histories, leisure activities
- decolonial representations, anthropocene studies, global Victorian literatures
- histories of imperialism, colonization, migration, diasporic communities and slavery

- genre fiction and ecologies
- spatial histories, environmental architecture in urban, rural, domestic and cultural spaces

Please send an email attachment of your 300-to-500-word paper proposal, without personal identifying marks, and the 2020 Proposal Info Sheet available on the ACCUTE website to Emily Rothwell and Lin Young c/o ACCUTE's email: info.accute@gmail.com, by November 15, 2019.

We are now thinking about plans for this fall's evening lecture, which will most likely be held in early November and possibly at a new (old) venue, in one of the museum houses in Toronto. We will be sending out full information about the date, time, location, and speaker for this event in the Fall.

It only remains for me to wish you all a wonderful start to the Fall term and to say thank you again to all of you for allowing me to be part of this wonderful association. It will be impossible to fill Suzanne's shoes—and I will, of course, be seeking lots of help from her—but I am so grateful to have the chance to try to follow her generous and scholarly example.

Sincerely,

Jo Devereux

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President, Victorian Studies Association of Ontario